

Counseling Matters

The School Counselor and PI 34

On July 1, 2004, the law related to licensure of all school staff in Wisconsin will change. It has been named the Quality Educator Initiative, or PI 34. Within each of the three major professional groups currently licensed (teachers, administrators and pupil services), there are three levels of licensure: Initial, Professional, and Master Educator. The major change and focus of this new law is the performance and competency of licensure candidates related to a set of standards for their area. To be certified for licensure (and relicensure), pupil services candidates must demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the seven pupil services standards. For a copy of the standards, go to:

<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/tel/pi34.html#pupilservicesstandards3404> . Licenses described below for school counselors and issued after August 31, 2004 will be issued for early childhood through adolescent level: PK-12. Educators holding licenses issued prior to this date will continue to have their licenses renewed as they were issued (unless an educator has completed requirements for a license change).

In order to receive an Initial Educator license in a pupil services category (i.e., school counselor) under s. PI 34.31, an applicant must successfully complete an approved graduate program at an accredited college or university and receive institutional endorsement. This is based on demonstration of proficient performance of knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSDs) related to the seven pupil services standards. Authentic assessment of the proficiency of the candidate will take place with a portfolio review prior to graduation, as well as with an exam. Currently, the school counselor's exam is under revision, and consequently on hold.

A school district is required to provide Initial Educators with all of the following: ongoing orientation, support seminars, and a qualified mentor.

The Initial Educator license will be issued for a period of 5 years, and is non-renewable. Prior to the expiration of this license (and no sooner than 3 years after the issue date), a school counselor must prepare a professional development plan which demonstrates successful completion of the Initial Educator requirements and ongoing, increased proficiency in all standards. This is done in collaboration with a Professional Development Team. The team is comprised of an administrator designated by the school district and approved by the school board; a representative of a graduate program that prepares professional school personnel ; and a school counselor who is not the mentor and is selected by peers. This team will monitor progress toward, and approve the completed plan. Initial educators will also be mentored by a peer who is not a member of the Professional Development Team. Approval of the professional development plan will allow an Initial Educator to move to the next level of licensure, the Professional Educator. Decisions of the Professional Development Team can be appealed.

The Professional Educator license is issued for a period of 5 years, and is renewable, contingent upon successful completion of a professional development plan by the educator. For school counselors who were initially licensed as Initial Educators, a professional development team comprised of 3 licensed educators selected by peers will review and verify successful

completion of the professional development plan. Once licensed at this level, an educator may choose to stay at this level of licensure for the remainder of his/her career, with renewal of the professional development plan every five years.

The Professional Educator license will be available as of July 1, 2004. School counselors who are currently licensed educators under PI 3 will receive a Professional Educator license when they renew, and will have the option to renew the license in the future by completing either a professional development plan or six semester credits of professional development.

The Master Educator license is voluntary, and available to school counselors via two methods: the DPI's master educator requirements or the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification process for school counselors. The methods will be comparable. Currently, school counseling is the only pupil services discipline that NBPTS nationally certifies.

The DPI's Master Educator license process* for Pupil Services is intended to demonstrate mastery of the pupil services standards. It requires: a related master's degree; verification of five years successful experience as a school counselor at the professional educator level or while holding a five-year license or a life license issued prior to July 1, 2004; evidence of contributions to the profession; evidence of improved student learning; and formal approval of the application by an assessment team which must complete a formal assessment, including observation of a demonstration of classroom performance. The assessment team consists of 3 DPI-trained educators of similar job responsibilities selected by the state superintendent; nominated by their professional organization, and approved for appointment by the State Superintendent. In addition, a school board member may be a member of the team.

The master educator license may be renewed after 10 years by complying with the same process as outlined above for first-time master educator applicants.

This article is intended as an overview of the PI 34 licensure process for school counselors. In the interest of space, certain details have not been included. For the complete law, go to: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/tel/pi34.html>

*At this writing, the DPI's Master Educator license process is in the final stages of development.